

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) In a method of producing a fused oxide body by decomposing a precursor compound of the oxide in a flame to form molten oxide particles that are collected to form a fused oxide body in a furnace constructed of a zircon refractory material, the improvement in the method comprising treating the zircon refractory material with a strong acid in liquid form to react with, and thereby remove, contaminants from at least the surface of the zircon refractory ~~brick material~~.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the improvement comprises treating the zircon refractory ~~brick material~~ with an acid selected from the group consisting of nitric, hydrochloric and hydrofluoric acids.
3. (previously presented) The method of claim 2 wherein the selected acid is hydrofluoric acid.
4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the improvement comprises treating the zircon refractory ~~brick material~~ in an acid bath maintained at a temperature in the range of 20-80° C.
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~which comprises producing wherein~~ the fused oxide body is a fused silica body.
6. (deleted)
7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 which comprises treating the zircon refractory ~~brick material~~ with an acid in liquid form either prior to or after a carbochlorination treatment.

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8. (currently amended) The method of claim 7 1 which comprises treating the zircon refractory brick material with an acid in liquid form after a carbochlorination treatment.

9-14. (canceled)